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TO : Department of State

FROM : Vienna #1294 January 28, 1953

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SUBJECT : QUADRIPARTITE ENTERTAINMENT IN VIENNASR/CE
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As opposed to their isolation elsewhere, the Soviet Element in Vienna exhibits a strange hunger for social intercourse with the Western Powers. Not only do they insist that customary official social gatherings be maintained on their established scale, but are seeking means of increasing their contacts. There are two rigid limitations on this activity, however, obviously imposed by Moscow -- social gatherings must be "official", and representatives of all four elements must be invited.

Since the comradely days of 1945, the numerous constituted agencies of the Allied Commission have customarily followed their meetings with a period of refreshments. Political differences and other topics apt to induce rancor are habitually laid aside at these sessions, and an almost universal attitude of friendliness is displayed by the Soviets. Any move towards economy by reducing the quantity or quality of entertainment -- frequently instigated by the budget officers of the Western Elements -- is steadfastly resisted by the Soviets. For this same reason, entertainment during the Soviet month is generally more lavish than the remainder of the cycle.

In May 1952 the Soviets invited the members of the Allied Commission and their families to attend a film at the Soviet Embassy -- one of the few occasions when the building is used. The building has been newly renovated, and the new marble and glass shone like a ducal palace. The guests were received by the Soviet High Commissioner, and plied lavishly with caviar and vodka. The film, "The Great Concert", unfortunately did not come up to level of the remainder of the entertainment. During the succeeding months the British and French followed suit, and thus a new custom was born; not without some regret on the part of the Western officials already overburdened with social obligations, it might be added.

Since last April the following films have been shown :

Soviets The Great Concert
Tale of the Land of Siberia
Life of Glinka
Volga - Don Canal

French Le Grand Balcon
Monsieur Fabre
Le Grand Patron

British Sound Barrier

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US American in Paris

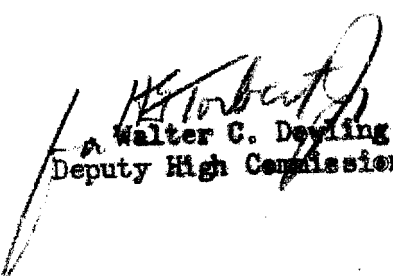
At first, the pictures were given in the ballroom of the Allied Commission building; but the \$100 expense of draping the room to improve the acoustics and hiring projectors proved too great a burden, and the several elements moved to various available theaters: the Soviets to their Information Center, the British and French to a nearby Austrian theater, and the US to the theater maintained by its Military Post. As on the first occasion, refreshments always precede the showings, and the Soviet Element can be depended upon to turn out in full strength.

To satisfy its obligations last September, the US Element invited all members of the Allied Commission to attend the opera, "Porgy and Bess". For reasons never determined, the Soviets failed to attend — except for three political officers.

The Soviets usually respond to private invitations to the homes of Western personnel, although their acceptance can never be depended upon in advance. Apparently, such invitations receive careful official scrutiny, and are passed upon at a fairly high level. The accepted means of tendering such requests is for the host to casually mention his intention of inviting his Soviet colleague, indicating off-hand a sampling of the other guests expected, and then at a later date presenting the actual invitation. In this manner the Soviet representative is saved embarrassment, and given an opportunity to seek a decision. This procedure applies more to the lower levels of the Soviet Element than to the top hierarchy.

Near the end of November, the British Element gave an Allied Commission dance, complete with a champagne dinner. The Soviets not only turned out en masse (except for the very top level) but stayed to close the ball. They appeared to have a genuinely good time, and have since repeatedly stressed that the affair should be perpetuated. Whether this suggestion can be quietly sidetracked, remains to be seen.

FOR THE HIGH COMMISSIONER:


Walter C. Dwyling
Deputy High Commissioner